

State AIDS Drug Program Expansion

TO THE EDITOR: I wish to tell your readers of the recent expansion of the AIDS [acquired immunodeficiency syndrome] Drug Program by the California Department of Health Services, Office of AIDS. This program, funded through a combination of state and federal funds, provides drugs for persons with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) who have no means to pay. Newly added drugs as of April 1, 1992, are ketoconazole, clotrimazole, and fluconazole. These are antifungal drugs that combat opportunistic infections associated with HIV disease. Fluconazole is also used to treat *Cryptococcus neoformans*.

Other drugs included in the program are zidovudine (AZT), aerosolized pentamidine, sulfadiazine, the combination of sulfamethoxazole and trimethoprim (Bactrim), pyrimethamine, didanosine (dideoxyinosine, DDI), dapsone, nystatin, ganciclovir, and clindamycin. The Office of AIDS has provided algorithms for all drugs covered by the program to assist physicians in determining the appropriate therapeutic regimen for their patients. The algorithms were developed through the review and assistance of physicians familiar with HIV disease. They may be used as a guide for treatment and may be obtained from the Office of AIDS by writing or calling our office.

To be eligible for the AIDS Drug Program, a person must meet these criteria:

- Have a valid prescription from a California-licensed physician,
- Have an annual adjusted gross income below \$50,000, and
- Not be covered under Medi-Cal or a third-party insurance company.

The only exception is if a patient's private health insurance does not cover drugs as a benefit. Funds from the AIDS Drug Program may be used to cover the costs of an insurance copayment if an enrollee meets all other eligibility criteria.

Eligible persons who do not have full health coverage and whose annual adjusted gross income is between \$27,240 and \$50,000 have a copayment obligation based on their state income tax liability. Those with an adjusted gross income below \$27,240 will receive the drug free of charge if they are without full health coverage.

For more information about the program, the eligibility requirements, or copies of the program guidelines and drug algorithms, please write to Richard Rockwell, State Department of Health Services, Office of AIDS, PO Box 942732, Sacramento, CA 94234-7320, or call (916) 323-4324.

WAYNE E. SAUSEDA
Chief, Office of AIDS
California Department of
Health Services
PO Box 942732
Sacramento, CA 94234-7320

about communication. I used translators whenever possible, but I was frustrated by my inability to give information about the children's heart problems to the families in a form that they could take home and discuss with the extended family.

About the same time, I noted that many medical students and graduate physicians whom I encountered were of widely disparate backgrounds and had language skills in areas where I was deficient—everything but English and Spanish. I began to encourage them to translate for me the "heart information sheets" that I had prepared in English and Spanish about such defects as atrial septal defect, ventricular septal defect, and tetralogy of Fallot so that the families could understand the ramifications of each defect.

I am pleased that the Pediatric Cardiac Clinic now is prepared to tell a family everything they want to know about, for example, transposition of the great arteries in nine languages: English, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, Tagalog, Vietnamese, and German. I am currently working on Arabic and Hebrew.

With only 126 languages to go, including Urdu and Sanskrit, I will be prepared to welcome children with heart defects from any part of the globe!

Pediatric cardiologists who are interested in obtaining the material should contact me, and I will be glad to send it along.

MARVIN L. AUERBACK, MD
Foster City Pediatric Medical Group
1295 E Hillsdale Blvd
Foster City, CA 94404

A Friendship Bridge to Vietnam

TO THE EDITOR: Friendship Bridge is a non-profit, humanitarian organization that is helping to fill the health care void that now exists in Vietnam. This tragic and poverty-stricken country has a barely functioning medical care system. Many of its hospitals offer little more than beds to patients, despite the presence of dedicated physicians and other health care professionals. Simply stated, Vietnam's medical community lacks everything, from the most basic supplies and equipment to additional training for its professionals.

Friendship Bridge works with physicians and hospitals in Vietnam (not with the Vietnamese government) in these ways: we send teams of American volunteer physicians and other health care professionals there for two-week periods to lecture and train their Vietnamese counterparts; we send new and used medical equipment and supplies to hospitals and clinics; and we seek sponsors who can underwrite visits to the United States by Vietnamese health care workers for up to three months of training.

Generally, our health care teams do not practice clinical medicine because we would rather train and teach Vietnamese physicians to do the necessary procedures. Here are some of the things we have accomplished in the few years that Friendship Bridge has been in existence:

- Twenty separate delegations have traveled to Vietnam to assess needs and have also hand-carried requested medical supplies.
- Since July 1990, over 100 tons of medical equipment, supplies, and books have been shipped to Vietnam to be distributed to six teaching hospitals in Saigon and Hanoi.
- We have sponsored 12 distinguished Vietnamese physicians, nurses, and dentists for advanced study in the Denver area.

Cross-cultural Communication

TO THE EDITOR: The September 1992 issue of the journal on cross-cultural medicine was of interest to me. During the 31 years that I have run the Pediatric Cardiac Clinic at San Francisco General Hospital, I have watched the children of the world who had heart problems come before me. As more and more children with diverse ethnic backgrounds sought medical care at the clinic, I realized I had to do something

- We have created teaching projects in nursing education, English training for Vietnamese physicians and nurses, cardiology, urology, orthopedics, respiratory therapy, physical therapy, critical care anesthesia, and dentistry.

We would welcome hearing from physicians and other health care professionals who wish to volunteer with us in some capacity. The need is so great in Vietnam that every discipline can find a role there. All of our volunteers pay their own expenses, which are usually tax-deductible. Friendship Bridge will make all the necessary arrangements, from forming the American teams (usually three or four professionals), to locating a specific hospital where you will teach, to arranging for your visa and reserving hotels. Spouses may accom-

pany the volunteers and often serve as well, giving English lessons to Vietnamese citizens or using other skills they may have. Costs are approximately \$2,500 to \$3,000 per person, sums that are paid directly to airlines and hotels. Friendship Bridge does not charge a fee for its services, though contributions—tax deductible as allowed by law—are, of course, always appreciated.

For additional information you can contact me at Friendship Bridge, 33424 Deep Forest Rd, Evergreen, CO 80439; telephone (303) 421-1203; FAX (303) 423-7329.

THEODORE C. NING, Jr, MD
Friendship Bridge
33424 Deep Forest Rd
Evergreen, CO 80439